Title: A Picture Is Worth A Thousand Words: How does the Illustrator portray sensitive themes in children's picture books?

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Table of Contents

Introduction……p. 3-4

Chapter One- Loneliness in a relationship…….. p. 4-13

Chapter Two- Loneliness in a new place……. p. 14-22

Chapter Three- Loneliness in depression…… p. 23-31

Conclusion…… p. 31-34

Bibliography…….. p. 35-38

List of illustrators…….. p. 38-39

Introduction

> Learning to "read" a visual story is certainly as important as learning to read the words. (Eubanks, 1999, cited in Weeks, 2013).

Children's picture books are a fundamental part of childhood. They allow children to explore their creativity and help to form their first perspective of the world around them. As well as this, they help in the development of their social skills, encouraging them to form thoughts and opinions of their own and spark discussions with others. Berger says 'Seeing comes before words' (Berger, 1972, p.7). In this case, as younger children lack language skills during early development, they may struggle to understand difficult emotions that they encounter for the first time.

It is important to inform children of sensitive issues such as death, divorce and difficult emotions as issues such as these are an inevitable part of life and will eventually be experienced by the individual at least once in their lives. But how can sensitive issues be explained to a child without causing a certain degree of shock or stress? This leads on to my main question into my inquiry; 'How does the illustrator portray sensitive themes in children's picture books?'

To answer this, I will be carrying out an in-depth analysis of three books; *Gorilla* by Anthony Browne, *A Lion in Paris* by Beatrice Alemagna and finally *The Red Tree* by Shaun Tan. All three books focus on a specific type of loneliness, which will form the titles of three key chapters; 'Loneliness in a relationship', 'Loneliness in a new place,' and 'Loneliness in Depression'. As part of my analysis of these books, I will be focusing on artistic techniques in areas such as visual metaphor, composition, colour, medium and perspective. This will help me form a cohesive understanding of

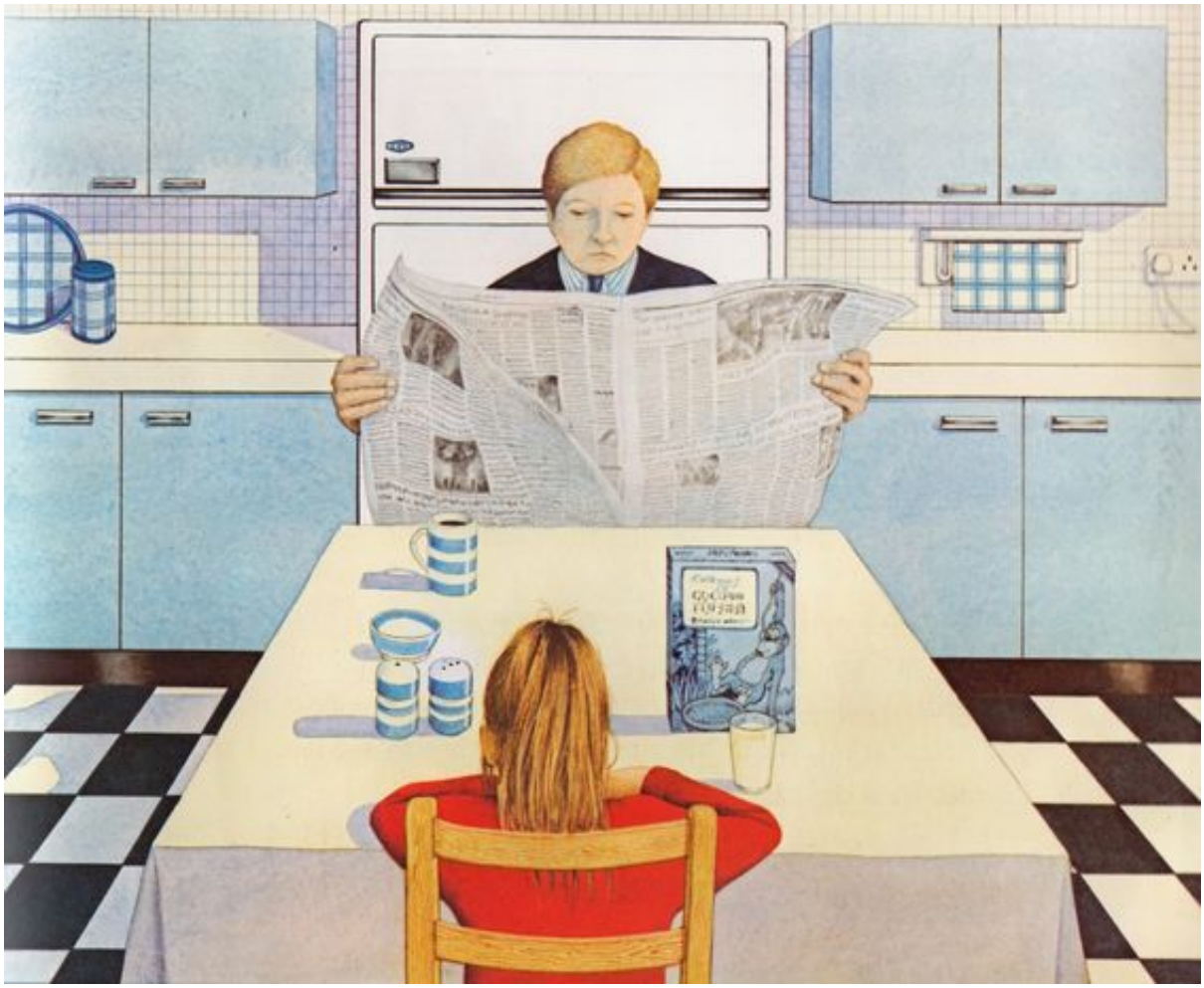
the illustrator's ideas and meaning which will then be compared to theory and child psychology.

Chapter One- Loneliness in a relationship

> Most children who feel neglected do not remain passive. They stand up and fight. Consciously and unconsciously, they seek strategies for how to win a share (or more) of love. (Schwarcz and Schwarcz, 1991, p.67)

In this first chapter, we will focus on the theme of loneliness within a relationship, and the difficult struggle a child can go through to when facing it. A key example of a picture book that addresses this type of loneliness is *Gorilla* (1982) by Anthony Browne. In this chapter, we will be analysing how Browne explores the themes of loneliness, isolation and rejection through subtle and sensitive details throughout the book's illustrations.

Gorilla tells the story of Hannah, a young girl who yearns for her father's love and attention, but her father is always busy and never has time. Gorillas form a large visual element throughout the illustrations of this picture book and act as an underlining metaphor of Hannah's longing for a father figure. 'As befits a drama, the book progresses in clearly outlined scenes that are intimately connected through the mesh formed by the metaphors.' (Schwarcz and Schwarcz, 1991, p.68).



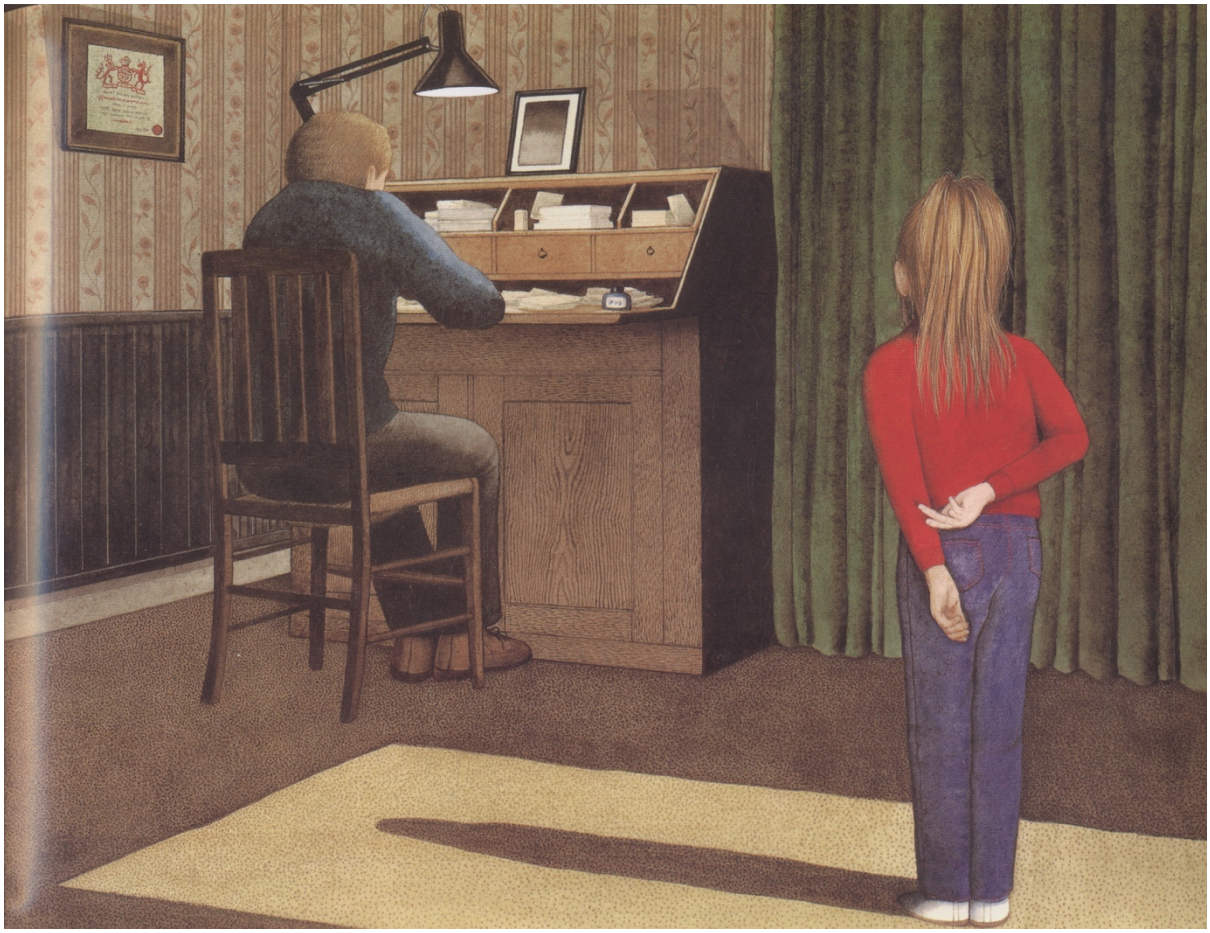
(Fig. 1, Browne, *Gorilla*, 1982)

At the beginning of the book we are immediately introduced to the narrative's main characters, Hannah and her father. We can interpret from this first illustration that the relationship between the two is very distant and cold, much like the surroundings. In *Looking At Picture Books*, Stewig, (1995, p.42) explains; 'An artist may use just one or two subtle hues to underlie or understate an idea'. We can see this here as the colour palette chosen for this scene are very limited. Blue and white are used quite heavily in this piece, which overall creates a very cold and clinical atmosphere. The only colour that stands out in the illustration is the red that Hannah is wearing. This

may represent the warmth and love in Hannah, while her father blends into the cold surroundings.

The choice of using the kitchen as one of the first settings is also worth noting. From looking at the counters in the background we see they lack any other detail, besides merely a tray, a tin and the cold, bleak kitchen tiles. The lack of kitchen clutter intensifies the very clinical and unhomely atmosphere Browne wants to portray, it almost looks as if the home is uninhabited as the room exists but lacks life, which consequently represents the relationship between the two characters. Another interesting element of the piece is the newspaper that the father is reading. This acts as a physical barrier or wall and plays on the idea that the father is totally disconnected from his daughter, as he blends into the background.

Browne also uses the perspective to portray the lack of power Hannah has over her situation. By placing her at the bottom of the table and at the opposite end to her father, Browne suggests that her father is completely untouchable, this is heightened by how small Hannah is. Suggested from the book's text, all Hannah wants is to spend time with her father, but he is always too preoccupied with something else. She longs for attention but is powerless. With the lack of eye contact and the slumped body language we see in Hannah it is obvious to recognise that Hannah is unhappy, and for a child seeing a character of similar size, it allows them to relate with the character, especially if they are going through a similar experience.



(Fig. 2 Browne, *Gorilla*, 1982)

As we progress through the pages, we see that in this illustration Hannah's body language shows signs of discomfort and unease, suggesting that she is perhaps nervous about disturbing her father. When analysing this image, Schwartz also describes the scene by saying;

> … her arms, hands, and fingers form an overwhelming picture of conflict between an outflow of feeling checked by the immovable figure in the chair. (Schwarcz and Schwarcz, 1991, p.68)

A young reader may understand this predicament and may relate this back to their own experiences. Schwarcz and Schwarcz further go onto quote; 'A girl of nine, looking at the picture, said, "It's as if the green curtain were coming down on all her wishes'. (Schwarcz and Schwarcz (1991, p.69)

We can also see that the surroundings are very dull and very limited in palette apart from Hannah, in a bright red sweater. Perhaps something that can be easily overlooked throughout the illustrations in this picture book is the use of stripes and gridded patterns. In the images analysed so far, we can see that this is reoccurring technique by Browne which subconsciously paints the idea of being trapped in a cage.

Following on from this, we can also see the shift in use of light and shadow by Browne, which consequently becomes very effective in terms of creating anxiety and tension. Here we see the light source cast by the open door creates a separation between the two characters, also acting as a metaphorical box around Hannah. This creates a very uneasy and unwelcoming atmosphere, which could represent Hannah's emotions of feeling trapped and isolated from her father's attention. In an exclusive interview with Morwenna Ferrier, from *The Telegraph*, Browne explains;

> I never want to make a child worried or afraid and I don't think I do. My pictures are born from the belief that children are far more capable and aware of social complexities than we give them credit for. (Browne, 2011)

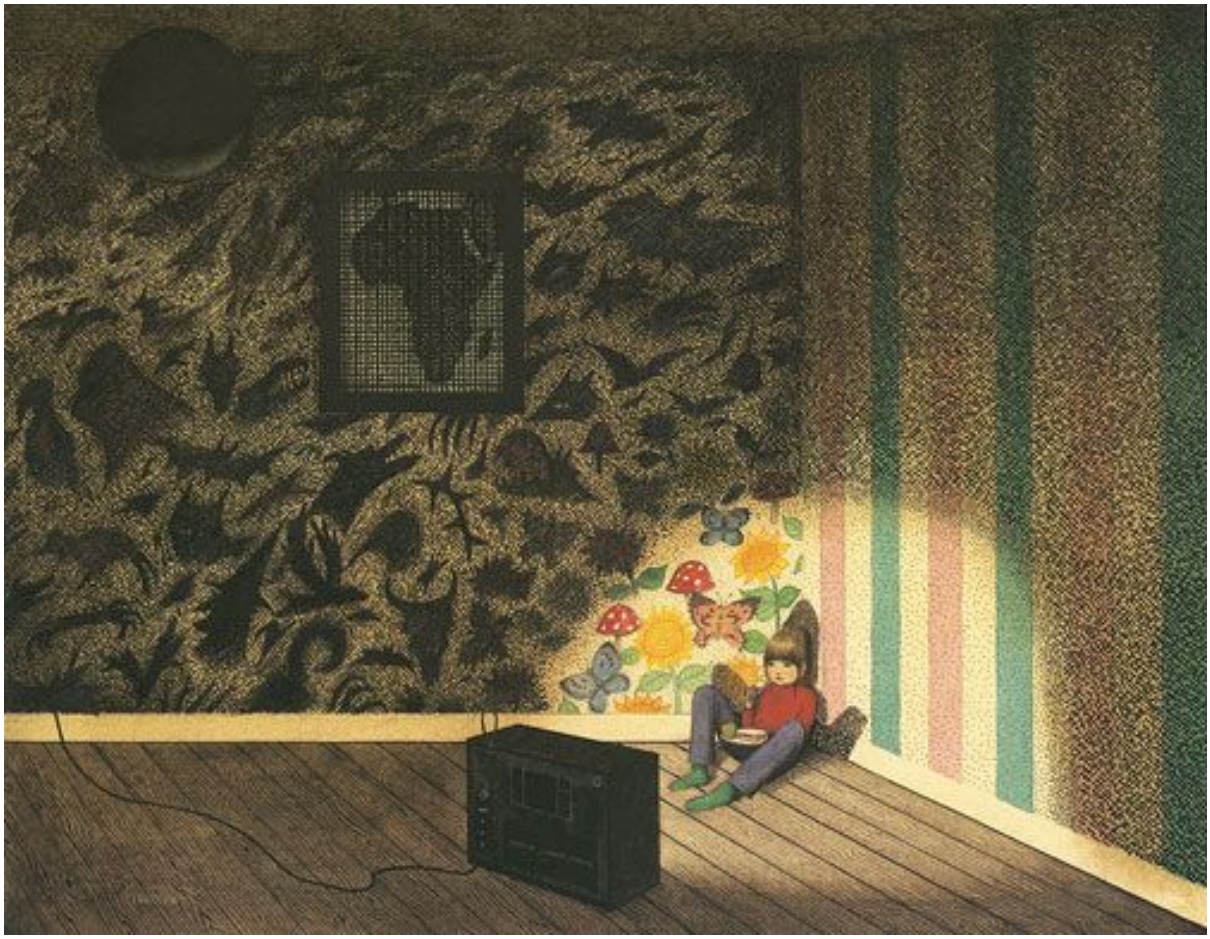


Fig. 3, Browne, *Gorilla*, 1982)

In this second illustration we see Hannah slouched in the corner of a dark room with the only light source in the space on her, much like a spotlight on a stage. Immediately from looking at this illustration, the reader gathers that this composition signifies that Hannah is feeling sad and overwhelmed with her emotions. Browne uses this composition convey the mood of the character to his young audience. When seeing the dark empty space with a small child in the corner, a child may find the connection between the idea of the dark with the feeling of being vulnerable and alone. This idea connects to the light source from the television, acting as a night light, a comfort to a child afraid of the dark. The lack of furniture and decoration in the room leaves us with the impression that there is no comfort in the relationship

between Hannah and her father, although we are told that they are father and daughter, it seems that the relationship is empty, like the room.

The patterned wall is another key element within this illustration. The wallpaper consists of dark, sharp edged and scary looking shapes which may represent a visualisation of the anxiety and fear Hannah feels. Although easy to miss when reading the book at first, upon a second reading you will notice that the small lit area next to Hannah is patterned with butterflies, sunflowers and mushrooms, representing the hope, warmth and innocence in Hannah. Nikolajeva and Scott state, 'Each new re-reading of either words or pictures creates better prerequisites for an adequate interpretation of the whole.' (Nikolajeva, and Scott, 2006, p.2) A picture book will very rarely only get read once and so in turn, this gives the reader an opportunity to go deeper into the meaning behind the pictures and analyse details more closely each time they read it. Browne uses this idea to his advantage. While discussing how children react to picture books in *Children's Picture books: The Art Of Visual Storytelling*, Salisbury and Styles (2012, p.81) state;

> Without knowing the vocabulary, or understanding terms such as visual metaphor, they nonetheless interpret visual symbols, sometimes with extraordinary aplomb. (Salisbury and Styles, 2012, p.81)

An example of this can be found in their research study on this topic. One hundred children aged between four and eleven were interviewed after reading the same picture book several times. After reading *The Tunnel*, an eight-year-old understands

that a piece of piping placed between the two sibling characters in the picture represents hostility and reflects upon the scene with her own experiences;

> You can see the brother don't want her near, because you can see the pole and he don't want his sister to cross it. Like me and my sister. We don't actually get along very much, because we fight a lot.
> (Salisbury and Styles, 2012, p.81)

From this, we can see that children can clearly recognise the meanings behind certain elements placed within the illustration, without the message being told directly. This is an excellent way author/ illustrators, like Browne can carefully discuss sensitive topics such as isolation, rejection and loneliness in books like *Gorilla*.

(Fig. 4, Browne, *Gorilla*, 1982)

In this final illustration from *Gorilla*, Hannah and Gorilla are at the Zoo. In this scene, Hannah finally gets to see the gorillas she has dreamed about and idolized. Firstly, it is clear that Gorilla has taken the role of Hannah's Father, this is emphasised by the closeness between the two characters in this image, and the contrast in colour between them, and the rest of the illustration. Compared to Hannah at the beginning of the book, we can see she is comfortable and happy now, based on her body language and upright posture.

The focus of this illustration is the confrontation between Hannah and the caged gorillas. This directly relates back to the idea of the imprisonment and isolation that

Hannah had been feeling at the beginning of the book and the use of stripes and grids to represent cages. From this observation, it can be implied that the gorillas shown behind the bars represent how Hannah was feeling prior to meeting Gorilla. This can also reflect on how others may be in a similar situation to Hannah and how they too, feel trapped by their emotions.

An interesting feature in this illustration is that both the smallest gorilla and the largest gorilla are the closest to Hannah and her gorilla and both hold eye contact with them, thus this could again, represent the two characters on the other side of the cage. While focusing on the cage in this illustration, the composition can be two very different predicaments. The crowd of gorillas seem to be highly intrigued by the two, as if they are the visitors looking into the enclosure. If observed this way, the idea of being imprisoned is deeply heightened.

Browne's techniques to portray the idea of loneliness is carried out exceptionally well. His application of realism in his illustrations become a way to sympathise with the characters as the reader can relate to them easier.

Chapter Two- Loneliness in a new place

(Fig. 5, Alemagna, *A Lion In Paris,* 2006)

A second example of a picture book that addresses loneliness and loneliness in a new place is *A Lion In Paris*, written and illustrated by Beatrice Alemagna. This picture book tells the tale of a lion who ventures out of his home in the Sahara to seek 'a job, love and a future' (Alemagna, 2006). Upon arriving in the city of Paris, the lion discovers that the people around him do not give him the attention he had previously expected, despite being a large lion.

Alemagna's use of collage is exceptionally intriguing. The collage and mixed media technique results in an unsettling undertone, which reflects on the anxiety felt during

times of loneliness. In this particular illustration, the lion sits at a table alone, with a melancholy expression and slouched body posture. The crowd around him show no interest in the lion, and look elsewhere, some directly towards the audience.

The composition is also quite unique as sharp, awkward angles dominate with obscure perspective and shape filling in empty space, forming tables, trees and street posts; the angle of the street is tilted and sloping, and the scale of the figures contradict the common rule of distance and proportion. All these elements together, reflect on the anxiety and confusion the lion feels of being ignored.

Similar to Hannah from *Gorilla,* the lion in this piece stands out from his surroundings in a warm orange. Again, like *Gorilla* much of the piece consists of muddy, dull and muted colours and represents the sadness of the lion, intensifying the melancholic atmosphere. As well as this, we can suggest that the image of a large lion in a crowd of people plays on the common phrase 'elephant in the room', a metaphor to describe a problem or difficult situation that people want to avoid or not want to talk about.

A lion, which is thought of to be big, brave and bold, now shows his vulnerable side. This is a direct contradiction to common perception of what a lion symbolises and represents. Whereas a lion is commonly thought of to be brave and courageous, he is now left confused, self-conscious, and alone, lacking confidence and self-esteem. A child reading this may make the connection between themselves and the lion in this story if they are new to a town or a school or an unknown environment.

> Children make personal connections to characters that are different from themselves and events that are different from those in their lives." Stories can humanize abstract issues and encourage children to think (and talk!) about how they might feel and what they might do in a particular situation. (Lewison, Mitzi, et al, 2002 cited in Bowen and Schutt, 2007, p.4)

However bold or confident a child may present themselves to be, venturing out into a new environment can be a scary thing, and leaving a place of great importance can feel like losing a part of your identity. Schwartz explains; A sense of attachment and belonging to, of love for and pride in the hometown and in the close environment- of being rooted in that place- may clearly be part of identity development. (Schwarcz and Schwarcz, 1991, p.113)

(Fig. 5, Alemagna, *A Lion In Paris*, 2006)

In this illustration, we see the lion walking through the streets of Paris, with the same sorrowful expression. The pedestrians in the illustration each carry a baguette under their arms, however the lion refers to them as ‘a strange kind of sword’ (Alemagna, 2006) in the book’s text. He goes onto to say how he was surprised that no one was attacking him. This emphasises the stress and paranoia he is feeling at this point in

the narrative, and perhaps this implies that the lion has had past experiences of violence and conflict. This idea can resemble a situation where a refugee child may have fled from their war-stricken country. This would also relate to how the child would feel lost and alone in a new place, like the lion.

The written text in this book is positioned centre of a plain white page opposite to the imagery, in a very small font. This clever technique helps emphasis the mood of the narrative Alemagna wants to portray alongside the imagery. The large white space of this page adds to the lion's feelings of isolation, and the choice of using small text helps exaggerate his feelings of feeling unimportant and lost in the large space.

A subtle but interesting detail in this illustration is the way Alemagna has positioned the lion. The lion walks towards the left of the page, with a stooped posture as he appears to drag his feet. This detail contradicts the common preconception in picture books where the character(s) move from left to right through the pages. Subtle details such as this unconsciously help show the emotion of the character, as Schwartz explains, 'Many psychologists consider an orientation toward the left in visual messages on expression of withdrawal or introversion, and movement to the right a representation of outward direction.' (Schwarcz and Schwarcz, 1991, p.17)

The lion's emotions are reflected in his surroundings. Harsh lines, obscure proportions and exaggerated perspective are used again in piece to emphasise the lion's confusion and at this point, his paranoia and anxiety. With the use of collage, intricate patterns form the pedestrians clothing, buildings vary in height, scale and perspective and the whole piece, like the last appears to be at an awkward angle.

The image at an awkward tilt and large amount of visual information creates a very disorientating effect, reflecting on the lion's confusion and paranoia of how no one is taking notice of him.

(Fig. 6, Alemagna, *A Lion In Paris*, 2006)

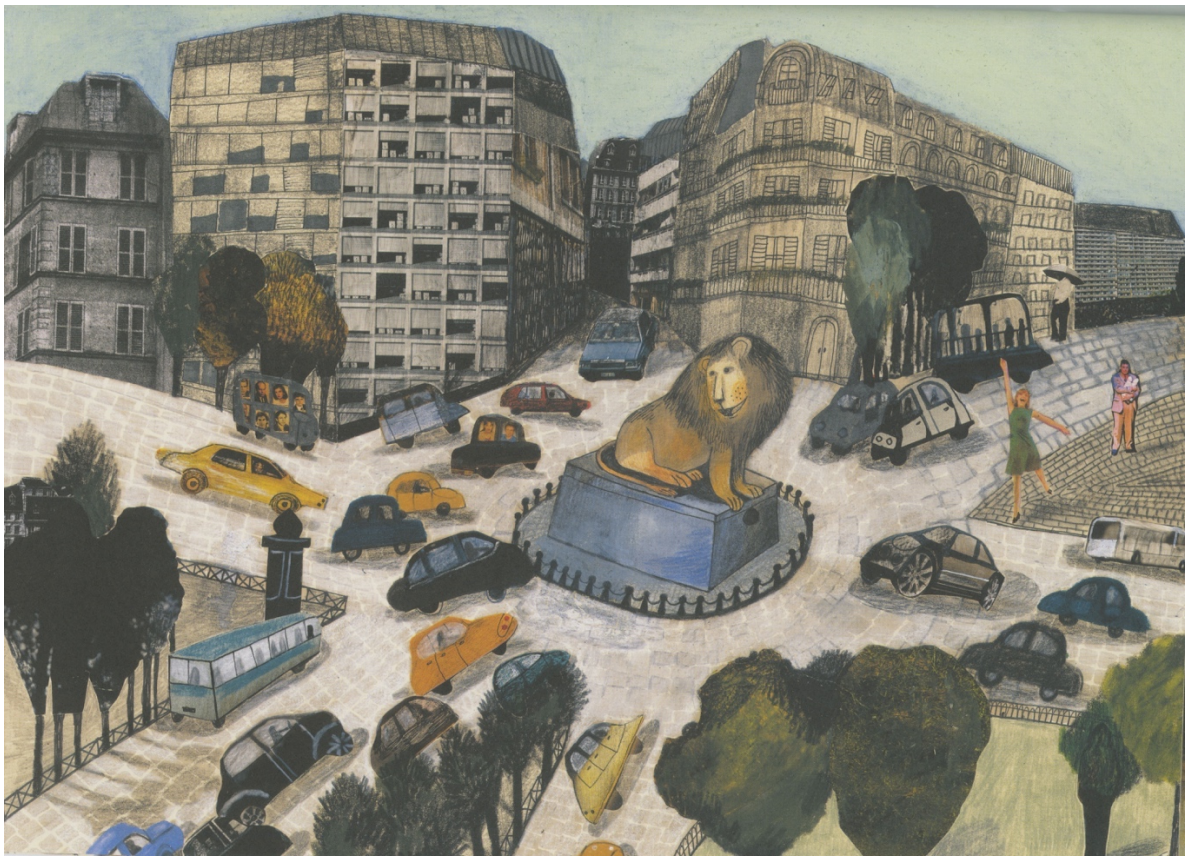
As the story progresses, the lion's sadness engulfs him as he thinks about his home in the Sahara. The rain casts a grey blue shadow over the scene and over the lion. The lion seamlessly blends into the background, loosing his bright orange glow, reflecting how he is feeling lost and alone. The buildings around him also lose the obscure, busy and unique shape to now be replaced by flat, monochrome structures. This transition may inform the reader of how the lion's sadness has escalated over time and has subsequently reached its lowest point, the result of the lion perhaps

feeling defeated at trying to find his place and identity in the city. This idea can be related back to how a child may struggle to fit in or find their sense of identity in a new environment, and how in order to grow and develop, a certain degree frustration and stress or anxiety is inevitable and is a normal part of maturing. Schwarcz and Schwarcz explain; The natural search for identity and the necessary quest for autonomy, the experience of discovering oneself and one's own powers, create conflicts and tensions necessary for growth. (Schwarcz and Schwarcz, 1991, p.21).

The building and other structures behind the lion are now formed by thin line work and lack the details that were included within the earlier illustrations analysed. From this choice of simplistic style, it visually represents the emptiness the lion feels in this scene as he sits alone, missing his homeland. The rain in this piece is also drawn in such a way, that it fills the entire spread, almost creating the illusion of a cage/prison bars. This again, links back to the technique of lines and grids Browne used in *Gorilla* to portray the idea of Hannah being trapped with her loneliness; we now see this here, with the lion and the rain.

Another similarity between this illustration and *Gorilla* is the inclusion of physical loneliness, most noticeably in (fig.3) where Hannah is pictured sat alone in the corner of a dark room. Alemagna sets this illustration apart from the rest by highlighting the character's emotions directly, by decreasing the number of pedestrians in comparison to the earlier illustrations in the book. This draws more focus towards the lion and may perhaps encourage a discussion between the child reader and adult. 'As texts with dual (or multiple) audiences, children's stories hold

more than one meaning' (May, 1983, p.55). The lack of people may also represent a projection of how the lion feels internally, which is alone.



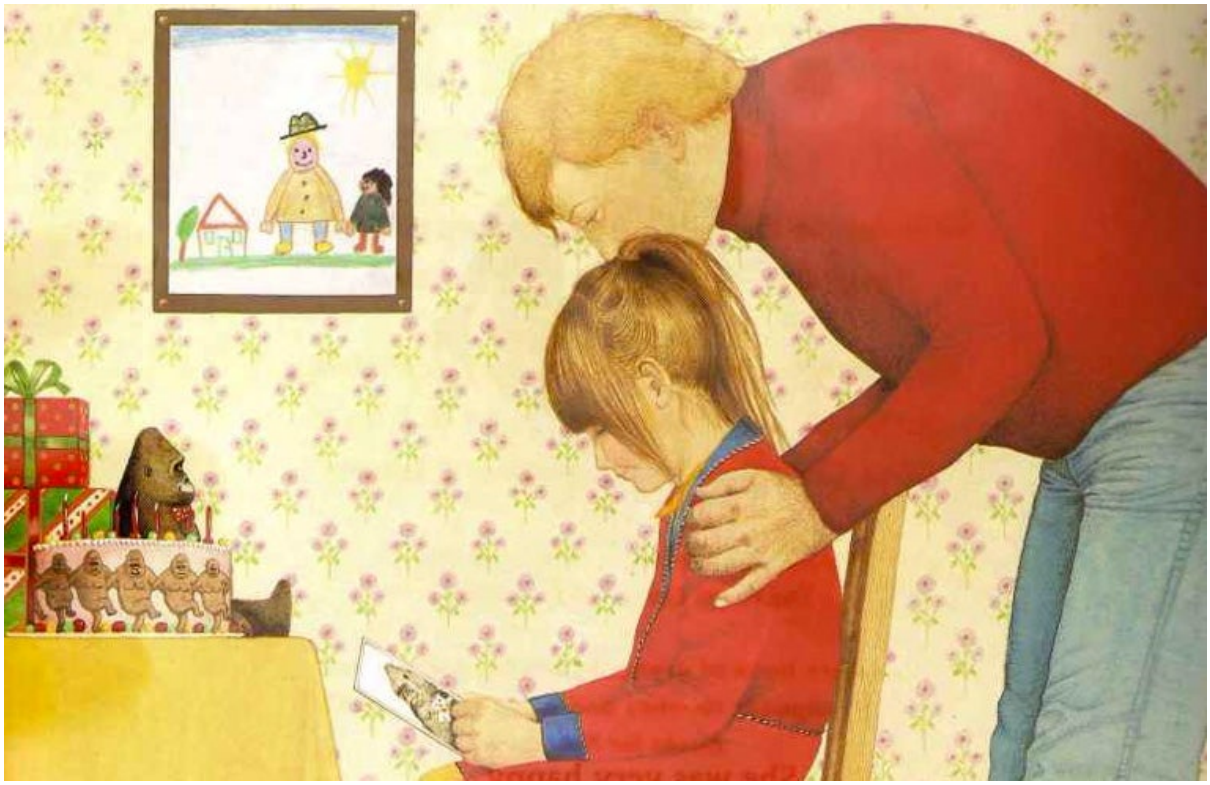
(Fig. 7, Alemagna, *A Lion In Paris,* 2006)

In this final illustration, the lion finds a plinth at the centre of a crossroads. Once the lion climbs on top, the scene instantly becomes reminiscent of the famous 'Lion of Belfort' sculpture by Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi in Place Denfert-Rochereau, Paris. This creates a revelation to the reader that the lion had a purpose all along, finally finding his place in Paris.

The lion gives a joyful expression as cars and pedestrians surround him. The lion's body language is now happy and open, compared to his earlier expressions where he appeared lonely and anxious. The composition for this illustration positions the

lion at the centre of the page, with the building, cars and pedestrians that were once facing away from him, now facing towards him. As the lion has now achieved the attention he had been longing for, his surroundings appear more positive. The colours are now lighter making the scene more uplifting. The composition is now calm, and symmetrical in contrast to the obscurity of the earlier illustrations.

When compared to the last illustration from *Gorilla*, a clear idea is shared between the two author/ illustrators when deciding upon colour. Both Alemanga and Browne have chosen to use lighter colours to portray the happiness in the piece, in contrast to the rest of the book where darker colours portray the loneliness and anxiety of the character.



(Fig. 8, Browne, *Gorilla*, 1982)

Chapter Three - Loneliness in depression

The Red Tree captures the feelings of the loneliness in depression through a series of illustrations, focusing on; metaphor, colour and perspective which are accompanied by short captions. Each illustration features a figure of a small girl whom the reader can identify with. On his website Tan explains, 'As a concept, the book is inspired by the impulse of children and adults alike to describe feelings using metaphor -monsters, storms, sunshine, rainbows and so on.' (Shauntan.net, n.d.).

(Fig. 9, Tan, *The Red Tree,* 2001)

In this first illustration, the young girl is captured within a glass bottle, on what appears to be a desolate beach or island, isolating her from any other company. The illustration is dark, and gloomy, with the only light source shining through the clouds in the distance. When mentioning the choice of settings in picture books, Nikolajeva and Scott explain, 'It can go far beyond this in establishing the genre expectations of the work, in providing a persuasive affective climate that sets the reader's emotional response in a particular register'. (Nikolajeva and Scott, 2006, p.61). In this case, Tan has purposely chosen this setting to convey the feeling of depression and isolation that the young girl is experiencing, and perhaps to help a reader who is feeling a similar way, understand their own emotions.

The girl's face is covered by a heavy diving helmet, and the shadows from within the mask are a deep black, masking all features of her face. This in turn, creates a very unsettling mood. The helmet also appears to weigh her down in the sense of not being able to escape, as it is clearly too big to fit through the neck of the glass bottle. The helmet, therefore, may represent the girl's depression and the feeling that she cannot escape its substantial weight on her shoulders. It may also hint at the idea of being prisoner to her thoughts as the glass bottle, creates a physical barrier between herself and the world around her, amplified by the desolate surroundings. This is also reminiscent of a message in a bottle, an S.O.S message drifted ashore, yet no one is around to help her.

Tan's choice of medium for this illustration was oil, acrylic and wax paper, which helps add to the unsettling mood of the piece through colour and texture. For example, the large brushstrokes used for the sky create a heavy blanket of black and

dark blues on the girl, while the rain created by the pencils look sharp and scratchy, resembling frustration. This theme is also shown outside of the border of the illustration, combining soft brushstrokes and harsh pencil scribbles. Perhaps the mark making itself resembles the bottled-up emotions that the girl feels in this piece, frustration and the heavy weight of sadness and depression over the thought that nobody understands her.

Words throughout this book are presented as small captions rather than a sequential narrative. Accompanying this illustration are the words ‘Nobody understands’ which sits at the bottom right of the page. This isolates the words from the rest of the page, making it seem inferior to the illustration, this relates back to how Tan expresses that the book was created to be open to the reader’s interpretations. He explains on his website, ‘Each image remains open to various interpretations in the absence of any accompanying description. What minimal 'story' there is seeks to remind us that just as bad feelings are inevitable, they are always tempered by hope’. (Shauntan.net, n.d.) Nikolajeva and Scott also agree with Tan by stating, ‘If words and images fill each other’s gaps wholly, there is nothing left for the reader’s imagination’. (Nikolajeva and Scott, 2006, p.17)

Another interesting detail found throughout the book is the red leaf hidden on each page. In this piece, the leaf can be seen hidden just behind the glass bottle on the right. Like *Gorilla* with the small gorillas illustrated on each page, the red leaf represents a small sense of hope within the large space of isolation and loneliness. As well as the red leaf, the light shining through the clouds in the distance may also acts as a sign of hope for the young girl.

(Fig. 10, Tan, *The Red Tree*, 2001)

Further into the book, Tan expands the amount of white space on the page, resulting in an incredibly detailed and important part of the overall design. At first, the reader sees a set of eight, small boxed illustrations. Following the order from the top left illustration to bottom right, the focus zooms out from the pencil, revealing the young girl drawing while sat upon a large snail. Firstly, the young girl can be seen counting numerals on the shell, very similar to a prisoner counting days of their imprisonment. As the perspective changes, the quantity of numerals increases across the surface, implying she has been trapped in her depression for a long time. Additionally, the presence of the snail emphasises the slow passage of time.

The spiralling trail of the snail can also be a representation of the lack of progression in overcoming her depression and loneliness. Tan also uses the setting to represent

the young girl's isolation, by placing her in a large empty space. Again, in this illustration we see the red leaf once more, situated in the top right image. Unlike the last image, the young girl's hair is shown, but no face. Like the red leaf, this can be another representation of hope in each illustration. This is another similarity between *Gorilla* and *The Red Tree*, as both use the colour red to signify hope in a piece that uses dark and gloomy colours to portray loneliness. Red was perhaps chosen by both Tan and Browne based on its common symbolism. It is also believed that 'red is used to indicate courage' (Color-wheel-pro.com, n.d.) as well as being associated with strength, power, determination and love.

Moving outside of the boxed illustrations, a large white space takes up the rest of the page, framing the illustrations. As this creates distance and a separation between the illustrations, each can be read as their own separate narrative. Nikolajeva and Scott explain, 'Framing is an extremely powerful visual element of setting. Frames normally create a sense of detachment between the picture and the reader, while the absence of frames invites the reader into the picture. (Nikolajeva and Scott, p.62).

While on the other hand, Nodelman argues, 'But while white space around a picture can act as a frame, create a sense of constraint and demand detachment, it can also do just the opposite; it can provide a focus that demands our involvement.' (Nodelman, 1988, p.53). This suggests an illustration within a frame, has the effect of creating different responses from the reader. A child reader experiencing similar emotions to the young girl in the book, may relate to the sense of detachment, while another child reader may sympathise with the young girl, wanting to understand how the girl feels.

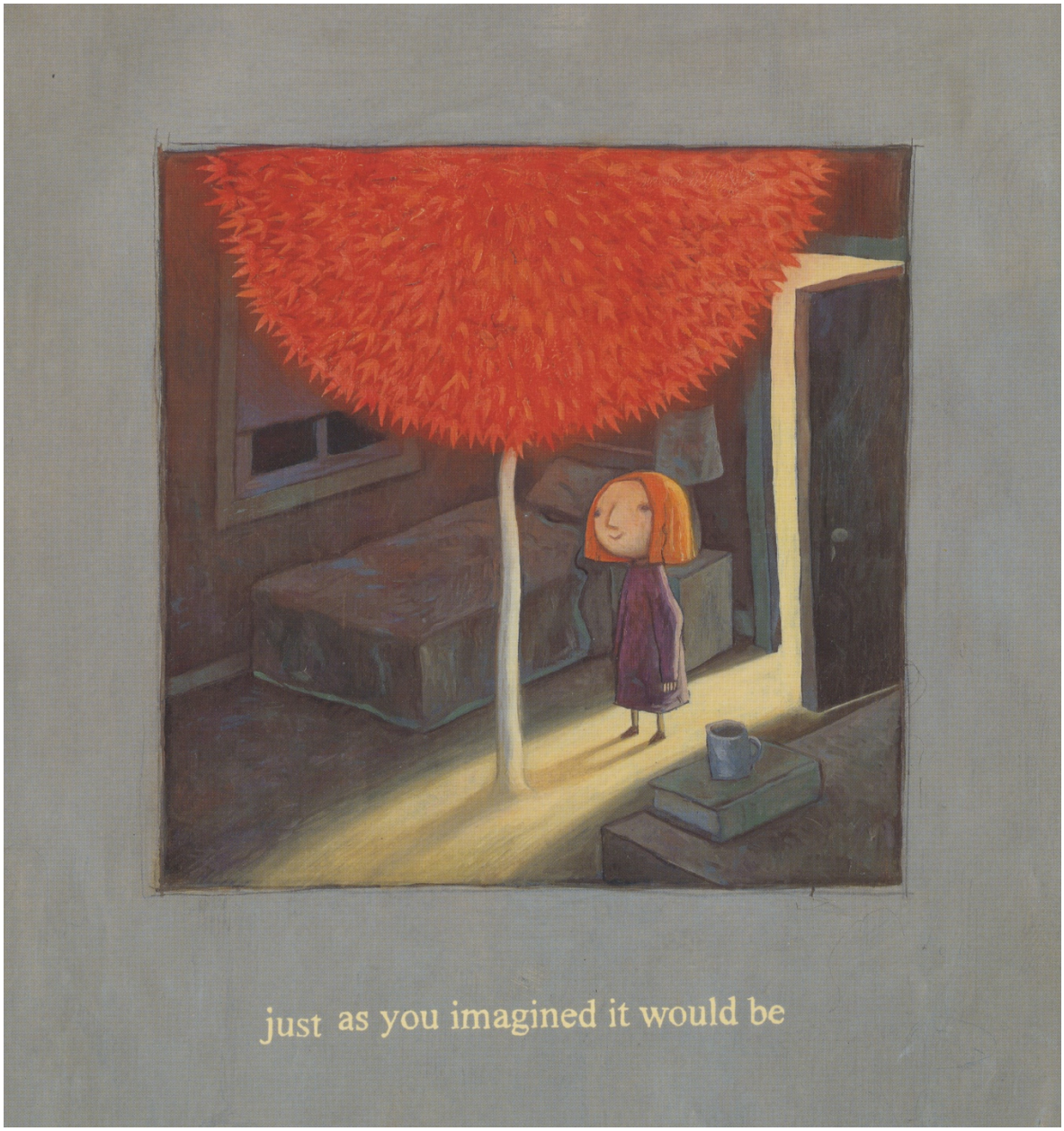
Lastly, the white space on the page is incredibly detailed with tiny handwritten words, shapes and scribbles, reflecting the thoughts and feelings of the young girl in the illustrations. Tan's way of reflecting the emotions of depression and isolation this way is ingenious as it is reminiscent of a child's scribbles and confusion on paper. Certain elements that stand out are small drawings of upside-down stickmen, as if they are falling; as well as, as keywords that correspond to thoughts linked to depression like 'alone', 'anxiety', 'fear', 'empty', and 'waiting'.

(Fig. 11, Tan, *The Red Tree*, 2001)

Similar to *A Lion In Paris,* Tan clutters the once empty composition seen in (fig.9) and (fig.10). The young girl is placed on stage in front of a crowded audience, performing an act alongside other characters. Tan exposes more of the girl's face in this illustration, but again, not all her face is shown as her mouth is still hidden. In *Looking At Picturebooks,* Stewig states*;* 'A cluttered illustration, straining against borders, with objects literally packed in, can be used to reflect the state of mind of one of the characters.' (Stewig, 1995, p.45). Therefore, it can be suggested in this case, that cluttering the surroundings of the young girl may have been chosen to represent the tension of the piece and her anxiety.

As well as this, the earlier colour palette of dark blue and grey is replaced with warmer colours such as red, orange and dark brown. Against the dark surroundings, the combination of colour and composition of the stage strangely resembles fire, while the tall grey character in the background resembles smoke. From this observation, it can be suggested that Tan relates the feeling of isolation to an abstract idea of hell. This is further supported by the depiction of a devil character peeking from a trapdoor on stage.

The composition of the young girl holding a puppet of herself on stage is also important in this piece as it symbolises a performance. In this context, it could symbolise that her 'act' is to appear normal to others, masking her depression and isolation. On the other hand, it can also be perceived as the audience seeing her depression as make-believe or pretend. The lighting also helps exaggerate the feeling of isolation as she is physically away from everyone else, under a spotlight.



(Fig. 12, Tan, *The Red Tree*, 2001)

The final illustration of *The Red Tree* depicts the girl faced with a red tree growing in the centre of her bedroom, that was once filled with black leaves. In each page of the book up until this point, the reader has been presented with a small red leaf hidden amongst the illustration as a sign of hope. From this last illustration, the hope has manifested itself in form of a tree, known to symbolise growth and transition. By analysing this further, the tree appears to be a maple tree, known to symbolise

‘strength and endurance’ (Bios Urn, 2014) in some cultures. By creating visual metaphors such as these, the illustrator conveys deeper meanings behind simple objects that unconsciously speak volumes to the reader. This can be linked to Schwarcz’ statement in *Ways Of The Illustrator* where he says, ‘In a way illustrating may be compared to translating’ (Schwarcz, 1982, p.24.).

Another interesting detail within this piece is that young girl finally shows all her face, more noticeably her smile. By piecing these two details together, it can be suggested that the young girl has finally found hope in overcoming her depression and the isolation she had succumb to, or perhaps found the strength to face her feelings.

Again, colour plays an important part in this illustration. The red tree creates a large blossom of colour not only in the room but across the page. This further strengthens the idea that there is always hope when going through a difficult journey.

Conclusion

Illustrators use a variety of techniques to help portray sensitive themes to the reader. When comparing the work of the illustrators analysed in this inquiry, we can distinguish three key techniques that all the examples shared to portray the difficult emotions and mood of loneliness. Firstly, each illustrator approached the use of their medium differently, and in correlation to the type of loneliness that was portrayed in their book. The use of soft mark making in acrylic or oil reflected on emotions such as sadness and sorrow as they are deep in both colour and texture.

This contrasts greatly to the use of graphite pencil, as seen in *The Red Tree* where the sharp, and scratchy lines reflect on emotions such as frustration. Like Doonan explains in *Looking At Pictures In Picture Books, '*As well as the materials, every mark, every modification of texture, the manner in which pen or brush originally met the surface of the paper- delicately or boldly, indecisively or sensuously- is telling.' (Doonan, 1993, p.12)

Colour was also a common technique used by all three illustrators. Colour was sensitively used to evoke emotion of the illustrations. Common colours used by all three illustrators were blues and greys to convey the feeling of isolation and sadness. Another example of this technique was used in the same way in both *Gorilla* and *The Red Tree*. The colour red was used by both Alemanga and Tan when creating a sense of positivity and hope within the narrative, seen in Hannah's red jumper and the red leaf appearing in each illustration. Colour can be an integral part to introducing new or difficult emotions to children. Lev- Wiesel and Daphna-Tekoha, 2002) state;

> It has been suggested that there is a reciprocal interaction between color and emotion, with particular feelings being associated with color, and the combination of cognition that affect all bringing memories, feelings, and emotions to the forefront (Lev-Wiesel, R and Daphna-Tekoha, S, 2002)

Finally, the technique of using metaphor as a visual description of loneliness and isolation was present by the illustrators in all three examples. By representing the difficult issue that is being addressed to the child reader as something that they are

more familiar with, it helps the child understand what is being explained to them. As well as this, it can also help the child feel more at ease with the sensitive issue if it is presented as something less frightening and scary.

> Metaphorical thinking is very important and essential in communication…These metaphors give us a broader view, how we see the world. These provide us a new perspective of conceptualizing the world. (Papaya, 2004, cited in Tehseem and Khan, 2015, p.8)

In all three books, the main characters were shown alone at the beginning and all eventually, found someone or something to accompany them towards the end of the narrative. Hannah met the Gorilla, the Lion found the plinth, and the young girl in *The Red Tree* found the red tree. By introducing a second character to the narrative, it creates a sense of hope for both the main character and the reader, and a figure that the child may relate a parent or guardian to.

By using visual metaphor, the illustrator invites the reader to explore their own interpretation of the picture, which may result in the reader relating the narrative to their own experiences in life and understanding the issues they may currently be facing. ‘The world of picture books invites interpretation and exploration because the book as an art form is conceived as a total package, a visual-verbal entity’. (Eubanks, 1999 cited in Weeks, 2013).

Through combining the use of these techniques and implementation, the illustrator is able to portray sensitive themes, like the topic of loneliness, to a young audience while keeping the topic approachable and easy to understand.

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List Of Illustrations

Figure 1: Browne, A. (1982) *Gorilla.* New York: Knopf. Available at: http://www.vintagechildrensbooksmykidloves.com/2013/05/gorilla.html

Figure 2: Browne, A. (1982) *Gorilla.* New York: Knopf. Available at: https://www.brownsbfs.co.uk/Product/Browne-Anthony/Gorilla/9781406352337#

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Figure 4:Browne, A. (1982) *Gorilla.* New York: Knopf. Available at: http://www.vintagechildrensbooksmykidloves.com/2013/05/gorilla.html

Figure 5-7: Alemagna, B. (2006) *A Lion In Paris*. London: Tate Publishing.

Figure 8: Browne, A. (1982) *Gorilla.* New York: Knopf.

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Figure 9-12: Tan, S. (2001) *The Red Tree*. South Melbourne: Lothian Books